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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC, OREP
SUBJECT: TRANSCRIPT OF THE NOON PRESS BRIEFING ON THE GUYANA SITUATION, MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1978
BEGIN TRANSCRIPT:
Q.
RODDING, SINCE I UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE REPORTS THAT IS GOING TO COST MORE THAN $3 MILLION TO BRING BACK THE BODIES OF THE PEOPLES TEMPLE AND SINCE THE REVEREND JIM JONES IS ORDAINED AND CONTINUED TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A CLERGYMAN OF THE 1.3 MILLION-MEMBER DISCIPLES OF CHRIST, WHO HAVE ACCEPTED HIS CONTRIBUTIONS FOR YEARS, I WAS WONDERING IF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION BELIEVES THAT ALL AMERICAN TAXPAYERS SHOULD HAVE TO PAY THIS $3 MILLION RATHER THAN THIS BEING PAID BY THIS DENOMINATION, WHOSE MINISTER WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS MASS KILLING.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/HR
DATE
REVIEWED BY
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TS AUTH, [illegible]
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A.
LES, I THINK THERE ARE TWO THINGS HERE. THE FIRST IS THAT I AM NOT, IN FACT, UP TO DATE ON A RUNNING TOTAL ON THE COSTS; AND I DON'T WANT TO DISPUTE THE COSTS. I WOULDN'T EVEN SUGGEST THAT IT IS HIGH.
Q.
Q.
BUT IT COST. THERE IS NO QUESTION.-
A.
BUT LET ME JUST SAY THAT I CAN'T DEAL WITH THE FIGURE YOU HAVE GIVEN ME.
ON THE BASIC QUESTION OF COST, I THINK THAT THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, MR. BUSHNELL, LAST WEEK SUGGESTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD UNDERTAKEN, FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS THAT HE ENUMERATED AT THE TIME, TO SEND AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE THE FOLKS -- THAT IS TO SAY THE BODIES OF THE FOLKS-- FROM GUYANA TO DOVER AND THAT AT THAT POINT THE COST OF

THE INDIVIDUAL BODIES IDENTIFIED AND WHAT HAVE YOU WOULD THEN BE ASSUMED IN THE NORMAL COURSE OF EVENTS BY THE INDIVIDUALS' FAMILIES.
I HAVE HEARD IT SUGGESTED THAT THAT IS A TERRIBLY EXPENSIVE THING FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. I HAVE SEEN A RESOLUTION FROM THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OUT IN SAN FRANCISCO THAT WE OUGHT TO ASSUME THE COST OF THE ENTIRE TRANSPORTATION OF THESE BODIES OUT TO THE WEST COAST OR WHEREVER.
TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION VERY DIRECTLY, THE ANSWER IS NO.
Q.
WELL, HODDING, TO FOLLOW THAT UP, IF THE REVEREND SUNG YUNG MOON WERE TO TAKE 900 AMERICAN MOONIES ON A CANOE TRIP

OVER VICTORIA FALLS, FOR EXAMPLE, WOULD THE U.S. TREASURY PAY FOR THIS, THE COST OF RETURNING THESE BODIES TO DOVER, AND WILL THE SECRETARY CONSIDER BILLING THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST FOR WHAT THEIR MINISTER CAUSED?
A.
I THINK THE ANSWER TO THE SECOND THING IS I KNOW OF NO SUCH CONSIDERATION.
ON THE QUESTION OF THE FIRST THING, LET ME SAY THAT THIS IS SUCH AN EXTRAORDINARY TRAGEDY -- SUCH, IN FACT, A MIND-BOGGLING TRAGEDY -- THAT THE ASSUMPTIONS THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT MAKES ARE FRANKLY NOT PRECEDENTAL BUT ARE ONE TIME INVOLVED IN THIS, AND THAT I WOULD NOT SUGGEST TO YOU THAT THERE IS ANYTHING TO BE SAID ABOUT -- YOU KNOW, ANY SPECULATIVE --
Q.
JUST ONE RELATED QUESTION, IF I COULD, HODDING, JUST ONE RELATED.
GIVEN THE 1200 LETTERS OF CONCERN ABOUT THIS GUYANA COLONY AND ENOUGH CONCERN FOR A CONGRESSMAN TO GO AND INVESTIGATE, COULD YOU TELL US, DID ANY OF OUR INTELLIGENCE SERVICES DO ANY INVESTIGATION OF THE GUYANA COLONY AND, IF NOT, WHY NOT?
AND IF THEY WERE ASKED TO INVESTIGATE AND WERE UNABLE TO INFILTRATE ONE CHURCH, HOW CAN THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE CONFIDENCE THAT OUR OWN INTELLIGENCE CAN HANDLE THE SOVIET UNION?
A.
YES, THERE IS NO FIRST AMENDMENT DEALING WITH OUR RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION, TO BEGIN WITH -- I MEAN, INSOFAR AS THE GOVERNMENT INTRUSION INTO ORGANIZED RELIGION.
THE SECOND THING IS, INSOFAR AS INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES

OR ACTIVITIES OF JUSTICE OR ANY OTHER SUCH ORGANIZATION,

I AM NOT THE PLACE TO ASK THE QUESTION. I THINK IT HAS BEEN DEALT WITH.
Q.
HODDING, RELATED TO THAT.
DO YOU KNOW HOW MANY SURVIVORS ARE GOING TO BE BROUGHT BACK, TO WHERE, WHEN?
A.
SURVIVORS. OKAY.
ON THE QUESTION OF THE SURVIVORS, IF A SUBSTANTIAL GROUP, WHICH IS NOT CLEAR, OF THE SURVIVORS WISH TO LEAVE TOGETHER FROM GUYANA, IT IS OUR PLAN THAT THEY WOULD BE FLOWN TO CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, BY MILITARY AIRCRAFT SOMETIME THIS WEEK.
AND I HAVE TO STRESS THE CONDITIONAL BECAUSE IT IS NOT CLEAR PRECISELY WHO WOULD WANT TO OR WOULD NOT WANT TO COME IN SUCH A WAY OR WHETHER THEY WOULD WISH TO COME.
AT THIS POINT, IN ANY CASE, IT IS VERY DOUBTFUL THAT SUCH AN UNDERTAKING WOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE LATE TOMORROW AT THE EARLIEST -- THAT IS TO SAY, LATE TUESDAY.
TO REPEAT, IT REALLY IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO SPECULATE HOW MANY PEOPLE MIGHT BE ABOARD SUCH A FLIGHT IN ANY CASE.
SOME OF THEM MAY DECIDE TO LEAVE BY OTHER MEANS. SOME MAY NOT WISH TO RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES. AND SOME MAY BE REQUIRED TO REMAIN IN GUYANA FOR SOME LONGER PERIOD OF TIME IN CONNECTION WITH THE GUYANESE INVESTIGATION OF THE TRAGEDY.
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I AM AFRAID THAT REALLY IS EXACTLY WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW.
I TALKED TO SOME PEOPLE DOWN IN CHARLESTON, AND THIS COMES FROM OUR TEAM UPSTAIRS.
Q.
HODDING, WOULD THAT ALSO BE AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE?
A.
I WILL HAVE TO TAKE THE QUESTION. I HAVE NO IDEA WHATSOEVER, THOUGH I WOULD DOUBT IT. I JUST DON'T KNOW.
I AM TAKING THE QUESTION, DICK.
Q.
HODDING, WILL THE U.S. GOVERNMENT NOW TAKE A CLOSER LOOK -- I MEAN WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION -- A CLOSER LOOK AT U.S. GROUPS, OR CHURCHES, OR CULTS, OVERSEAS?
A.
AGAIN, I THINK THE CONSTRICTIONS AND RESTRICTIONS ARE FAIRLY SEVERE AND FAIRLY CLEAR AS TO THE EXTENT OF WHAT WE CAN DO BESIDES INVESTIGATE COMPLAINTS AS WE DID IN THIS INSTANCE THROUGH THE CONSULAR SERVICE AND ATTEMPT TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER OR NOT AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE BEING HELD AGAINST THEIR WILL IN SITUATIONS ABROAD.
I THINK I MAY HAVE SAID THIS LAST WEEK. AS FAR AS WHAT LESSONS MAY BE LEARNED FROM THIS TRAGEDY, WHAT

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DIFFERENT EMPHASIS MIGHT BE CREATED IN FUTURE HANDLING AND THE SENSITIVITY TO POSSIBILITIES -- WHICH, QUITE FRANKLY, I THINK NO ONE IN THIS ROOM WOULD DENY WERE UNTHINKABLE BEFORE THEY HAPPENED AS A REALITY -- I CAN'T SPECULATE AS TO WHAT WE MAY BE CONSIDERING BECAUSE IT IS STILL EARLY DAYS.

Q.

HODDING, IS THE UNITED STATES SATISFIED WITH THE EXPLANATION GIVEN FOR THE DRASTIC MISCOUNT OF THE BODIES, AND

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DOES THE UNITED STATES PLAN TO INVESTIGATE SOME KIND OF-- DO SOME KIND OF INVESTIGATION INTO WHY THERE WAS SUCH A DRASTIC MISCOUNT OF THE BODIES?

A.

I THINK THAT THE REASONS THAT HAVE BEEN GIVEN FOR THAT UNDERESTIMATE ARE ACCEPTABLE AND BELIEVABLE; AND I CAN ONLY SAY, SPEAKING PERSONALLY, THAT I DO NOT FIND IT AT ALL SURPRISING. BUT I THINK THAT IS THE ATTITUDE ALSO THAT WE HAVE.

Q.

HODDING, WHAT HAPPENS TO THE MONEY THAT WAS RECOVERED FROM THAT? DOES THAT GO BACK TO THE PEOPLES TEMPLE IN SAN FRANCISCO?

A.

I DON'T KNOW. I THINK THAT IS A LEGAL QUESTION WHICH I CAN'T DETERMINE. YOU MIGHT TRY JUSTICE ON THAT AND I WILL SEE WHAT I CAN GET ON IT.

JEFF, DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA?

MR. DIETERICH: YES.

I THINK THAT THE MONEY AT THIS POINT FOUND ON THE SITE IN JONESTOWN IS IN THE CUSTODY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA. THE FIRST DETERMINATION WOULD DEPEND UPON LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS IN GUYANA, THE GUYANESE COURT SYSTEM.

A.

NEXT QUESTION. GO AHEAD.

Q.

HODDING, TO FOLLOWTHIS UP, DID I UNDERSTAND YOU TO SAY THAT TO INVESTIGATE OR INFILTRATE THE PEOPLES TEMPLE WOULD HAVE BEEN A GOVERNMENT INTRUSION INTO ORGANIZED

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RELIGION FORBIDDEN BY THE FIRST AMENDMENT?

A.

I THINK THERE IS A FEELING THAT THERE ARE CONSTITUTIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON INVESTIGATIONS OF ORGANIZED RELIGIOUS CULTS.

Q.

CARDINAL CROWL OF PHILADELPHIA, AS YOU WILL RECALL, HAS CHARGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS REGULARLY INTRUDING INTO

HIS PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS WITH AGENTS AND DEMANDS FOR FILES, AND NOT ONLY THAT BUT THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FORCED EIGHT PROMINENT CLERGYMEN ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO REGISTER AS FOREIGN AGENTS BECAUSE THEY ENTERTAINED AFRICAN CLERGYMEN.
NOW, I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY IF YOU INTRUDE THAT WAY, WHEN THERE ARE REPORTS OF BEATINGS AND ALL MANNER OF THINGS GOING DOWN THERE YOU FELT THAT YOU COULDN'T INVESTIGATE, HODDING.
A.
WE DID INVESTIGATE.
Q.
HOW DID YOU INVESTIGATE? YOU SENT A GUY OUT THERE TO SAY, "IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT," OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF A FIELD?
A.
THAT IS RIGHT. IT WAS --
Q.
THAT IS THE ONLY INVESTIGATION YOU CONDUCTED, IS THAT CORRECT?
A.
INSOFAR AS IN THE FIELD, IN GUYANA, IS CONCERNED, THE ANSWER IS TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE YES.
STAYING ON GUAYANA FOR A MOMENT, LET ME SEE THE HANDS OF

PEOPLE WHO WANT TO TALK ABOUT GUYANA.
Q.
HODDING, IS THE STATE DEPARTMENT AWARE OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS REPORTED SUICIDE NOTE FROM THE REVEREND JONES? AND, IF SO, IS THERE ANYTHING YOU CAN SAY ABOUT IT OR WHY THE CONTENTS ARE NOT BEING RELEASED?
A.
I THINK THAT, WHILE THE ENTIRE SET OF CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVING CRIMES IN GUYANA IS UNDER INVESTIGATION, OUR ABILITY TO COMMENT ON VARIOUS DOCUMENTS -- AND I HAVE SEEN A NUMBER THAT HAVE SURFACED THAT ALLEGEDLY SAID THIS OR THAT OR THE OTHER -- IS GOING TO BE SEVERELY CURTAILED. WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE COMMENTING WHILE THE INVESTIGATION IS UNDER WAY BOTH INTO THE MURDERS OF THE CONGRESSMAN AND THE PARTY AND THE DEATHS OR WHATEVER -- SUICIDE, MURDERS, WHATEVER THEY MAY BE. UNTIL THAT INVESTIGATION IS COMPLETE, WE ARE NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO COMMENT ON VARIOUS DOCUMENTS WHICH MAY FIGURE IN THE INVESTIGATION.
Q
HAS THE DEPARTMENT SEEN THIS NOTE, THOUGH? IS IT AWARE OF WHAT IS IN THE NOTE?
A.
JEFF, DO YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT ONE?
MR. DIETERICH: MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THE NOTE WAS FORWARDED FROM DOVER THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE,

AND THEN THAT PACKAGE WAS DELIVERED UNOPENED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.
TO PROCEED.
MR. DIETERICH: YES.

Q.
HODDING, IS THE STATE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATING A POSSIBLE POLITICAL TIE BETWEEN BURNHAM AND JONES AND SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO CAMPAIGNED FOR BURNHAM, AND THEY BOTH HAVE CERTAIN IDEALOGICAL THINGS IN COMMON?
A.
I THINK THE ANSWER TO THAT IS NO. THE ANSWER WOULD BE THAT AGAIN THE ACTIVITIES, POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, OF AMERICAN CITIZENS ABROAD IN THAT RESPECT WOULD BE A MATTER FOR THE GOVERNMENT OR THE PEOPLE OF THAT COUNTRY TO DECIDE WHETHER THEY VIOLATED THE LAWS OF THE COUNTRY OR NOT. IT IS NOT A SPECIFIC FUNCTION OF STATE TO LOOK INTO THAT QUESTION, INCLUDING ANY NUMBER OF OTHER AMERICAN CITIZENS' ACTIVITIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHICH MAY HAVE A POLITICAL CAST.
HODDING, DOES THAT APPLY AS WELL TO JONES' NOW REPORTED OR PURPORTED ACTIVITIES WITH REGARD TO THE SOVIET EMBASSY DOWN THERE?
A.
AGAIN, I HAVE SEEN THAT REPORT. I AM REALLY NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO COMMENT ON THAT BEYOND JUST SAYING THAT I HAVE NOTED IT.
AGAIN, THE DESIRE OF AMERICAN CITIZENS TO TRAVEL, TO GO ALMOST ANYWHERE ABROAD, IS AN UNRESTRICTED RIGHT WHICH DOES SET US OFF FROM AN AWFUL LOT OF COUNTRIES.
Q.
CAN YOU COMMENT EITHER ON WHETHER THE STATE DEPARTMENT OR INTELLIGENCE KNEW ABOUT THAT OR WHETHER THERE IS GOING TO BE AN INVESTIGATION INTO THAT?
A.
NO. I REALLY CAN'T COMMENT ON IT. AGAIN, IF THERE WERE AN INVESTIGATION, I COULDN'T COMMENT ON IT. SO THAT THE QUESTION -- YOU MIGHT AGAIN APPLY THAT ONE TO AN

INVESTIGATORY AGENCY. I CAN'T DEAL WITH THAT.
Q.
HODDING, DID YOU ESTABLISH, HOWEVER, WHETHER SOVIET OFFICIALS VISITED JONESTOWN OR NOT?
A.
I HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THAT.
Q.
COULD YOU TELL ME WHAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS TRYING TO DO TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS WITH WHICH THIS COUNTRY IS

RECEIVING THE POLITICAL PRISONERS CASTRO IS RELEASING?
A.
WAIT A MINUTE. I HAVE TO STAY WITH GUYANA. DON'T WORRY.
YOU ARE GOING TO BE THERE.
Q.
A COUPLE OF QUICK POINTS.
IN 1974 THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE NEGOTIATED AN AGREEMENT WITH BURNHAM THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD ALLOW THESE CULTS TO SETTLE THERE.
NOW, THE FIRST DAY WE HAD A BRIEFING HERE MR. BUSHNELL INDICATED THAT IT WAS MAINLY THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT THAT WANTED THE CULTS. OUR INFORMATION IS DIFFERENT, AND I WAS WONDERING IF YOU COULD FIND OUT -- I MEAN IT WAS OBVIOUSLY BEFORE YOUR TENURE HERE; IT WAS UNDER KISSINGER -- BUT COULD YOU FIND OUT WHO NEGOTIATED WITH THE BURNHAM GOVERNMENT AND ANYTHING THAT YOU COULD MAKE PUBLIC ABOUT THAT?
A.
LAURA, I AM NOT AWARE OF SUCH AN AGREEMENT TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR GROUPS TO MEET. I THINK THAT LONG PRECEDED JONES' INTEREST THERE.
Q.

NO. 1974.
A.
'74, YES.
I WILL SEE WHAT I CAN FIND.
I AM JUST LOOKING OVER TO MY SOURCE FOR SPECIFICITY HERE.
Q.
WELL, OUR SOURCES ON THAT ARE CLOSE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GUYANA.
A.
I WILL JUST HAVE TO SEE WHAT I CAN GET.
Q.
EXCUSE ME. I JUST HAVE ANOTHER QUICK QUESTION.
I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHO MADE THE DECISION THAT THE ADVISER ON TERRORISM TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN ANY INVESTIGATION OF THIS?
A.
I AM SORRY, I WOULDN'T GIVE OUT SUCH A DECISION -- I MEAN, AS TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS OF WHO DOES OR DOESN'T PARTICIPATE IN WORKING GROUPS OR TASK FORCES OR ANYTHING OF THE SORT. YOU WOULD HAVE TO ASSUME THAT THE FINAL AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY LIE WHERE FINAL AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY LIE.
Q.
HODDING, JUST TO MAKE SURE I UNDERSTAND YOU CORRECTLY, WHAT YOU HAVE SAID IS THAT DESPITE THESE 1200 LETTERS AND THE CONGRESSMAN'S CONCERN ENOUGH TO GO DOWN THERE, THE ONLY INVESTIGATION EVER DONE BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

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UNDER THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WAS THIS CONSULAR PERSON
WHO INVESTIGATED PEOPLE IN THE FIELD?
ARE YOU SAYING THAT, OR DID I MISUNDERSTAND?
A.
WHAT, I SAID WAS THE ONLY INVESTIGATION DONE IN GUYANA

BY AN AMERICAN AGENCY THAT I AM AWARE OF WAS DONE BY
CONSULAR AFFAIRS.
Q.
WHAT ABOUT REPORTS THAT THE CIA HAD BEEN IN THERE FIVE
TIMES?
A.
I SIMPLY AM NEITHER AWARE OF IT NOR COULD I COMMENT ON IT.
BUT THAT WOULD, IN FACT, BE OUTSIDE THEIR CHARTER, AS I
UNDERSTAND IT. THEY ARE NOT CHARTERED TO LOOK INTO
THE AFFAIRS OF AMERICAN CITIZENS ABROAD, UNDER THE NEW
CHARTER.
BUT AT ANY RATE YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK WITH THEM.
Q.
HODDING, JUST ONE LAST QUESTION ON GUYANA. DID I
UNDERSTAND YOU -- MAYBE YOU HAVE BEEN ASKED THIS BEFORE
AND IF SO PLEASE FORGIVE ME -- BUT THERE ARE REPORTS
THAT THERE WERE INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN BY THE REVEREND
JIM JONES THAT THIS MONEY SHOULD BE TAKEN TO THE SOVIET
EMBASSY. I WAS JUST WONDERING, IS THE STATE DEPARTMENT
AT ALL CONCERNED OR WONDERING ABOUT THE EXTENT OF
SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN THE PEOPLES TEMPLE?
A.
TO BE QUITE FRANK WITH YOU, I AM NOT AWARE OF ANYTHING
BEYOND THESE STORIES. I DO NOT KNOW, I WOULD NOT TRY
TO ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF CONCERN -- OBVIOUSLY INTERESTED
IN ANY SUCH STORIES.
Q.
IS INTELLIGENCE INVESTIGATING THIS, OR DO YOU KNOW?
A.
I DON'T KNOW. AND I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SAY IF I DID.
Q.
HODDING, ON THAT, THERE IS A RUMOR, I GUESS, THAT THE

UNITED STATES WAS ACTUALLY THE OWNER OF THE LAND ON
WHICH THE PEOPLES TEMPLE WAS LOCATED.
A.
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT I HAVE EVEN HEARD IT, BUT I
UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS A LEASE SITUATION.
Q.
A LEASE BY THE PEOPLES TEMPLE?
A.
AGAIN, I AM NOT SURE WHAT THE RELATIONSHIP IS, BUT

INSOFAR AS THE GOVERNMENT --
Q.
OF THE UNITED STATES.
A.
IN THE AFTERMATH OF THIS STORY, I WON'T SAY ANYTHING CATEGORICAL, BUT I JUST WOULD DOUBT IT.
Q.
CAN YOU TAKE IT?
A.
SURE, I WILL TAKE THE QUESTION.
Q.
WHILE WE ARE ON RUMORS, WERE THERE ANY PEOPLES TEMPLE MEMBERS ORGANIZED IN ANY WAY IN VENEZUELA?
A.
AGAIN, I DON'T KNOW. I WILL HAVE TO TAKE THAT ONE.
Q.
ISN'T THAT SOMEWHAT DISPUTED TERRITORY ANYWAY, BETWEEN GUYANA AND VENEZUELA?
A.
YOU MEAN AROUND THERE ON THAT BORDER?
Q.
YES.
A.
I UNDERSTAND AT LEAST PORTIONS OF IT ARE.
Q.

THANK YOU. VANCE

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